



UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,

APRIL 24TH, 1888.

REMARKS MADE ON THE OCCASION OF THE ALUMNI TESTIMONIAL TO DR. D. HAYES AGNEW,

BY

DR. WILLIAM PEPPER,

PROVOST OF THE UNIVERSITY.

It is fitting that this imposing celebration should occur here within the walls of the University, because it has been in the service of the University that many of the great qualities of our distinguished and beloved guest have been most conspicuously displayed, and because I know he feels happiest when thus surrounded by his own brethren, who share with him to the full his devotion to Alma Mater. It might seem out of place were I to dwell at length on the technical features of Dr. Agnew's surgical career. Some thoughts there are, however, which force themselves on the mind of any clinician in regarding that stretch of fifty years' continuous labor in one of the most important and progressive fields of human industry. One cannot but recognize in this work a breadth and comprehensiveness almost unique. If we must admit specialism as the inevitable result, just as it is in large measure the determining cause, of the progress and precision of medical science, still we shall not dispute the pre-eminence of those rare natures whose wider range embraces many special fields, and by enabling them to see truth from many sides imparts to their judgment a philosophic breadth and perspective. When I recall the basis of profound anatomical study on which Dr. Agnew's work has been built up; the patient pursuit of pathology with

microscope as well as scalpel, in days when histology was a rare acquirement; the successful career at Wills' Hospital, which made him famous among the early ophthalmologists; the brilliancy of his work as a pioneer in the field of gynecology; his deserved eminence as an authority in genito-urinary diseases; it is evident that here has been one of those exceptional careers, ever progressing, assimilating, developing, until there is attained that combination of immense experience, of infinite expedient, and of calm, chastened judgment, which commands the confidence of the entire profession, and upon which a nation rested with implicit faith through weary weeks of agonized waiting.

Again it may be noted that not the least remarkable feature in such a career is the happy blending of conservatism with progressivism. Too often do years and success convert the conservative into the fossil; too rarely do they bring balance and moderation to the radical. How admirable then is that still rarer spectacle of mature wisdom joined with the intellectual activity and assimilative power of youth. It seems to me a fine thing for a man, at the close of fifty years of teaching and practice, to be in close touch with the latest procedure even in regard to such complicated problems as those of abdominal and cerebral surgery. But it is a more valuable lesson to see one of the highest authorities on all points of practical surgery, at the age of well nigh three score and ten years, seize upon the earliest announcement, subject to immediate searching trial, and, upon convincing evidence, adopt finally, such new and epoch-making teachings as those of Lister. It seems to me among the crowning distinctions of Dr. Agnew's career that he so promptly threw the weight of his great authority in America on the side of thorough antisepsis. But I may not venture to dwell longer on matters so technical. That to which I can more fitly allude is the portion of his career which concerns medical education, especially in connection with the University of Pennsylvania. It were superfluous to state here what Dr. Agnew has been in his personal relations with the thousands of physicians who have trusted him and depended on his counsel in the gravest professional

anxieties. It were equally needless to express—for do not nearly all here know it well from experience—what he has been as teacher and friend to the even larger number who have learned their anatomy and their surgery from his lips and hands. Simple and unaffected, yet always clear and forcible, his lectures seemed to me models both for manner and matter, admirably adapted to convey instruction, to awaken thought, to impress upon his hearers the dignity and importance of the study. And in his clinical teaching what a happy blending of calm science and benign humanity! No matter how critical the emergency, you felt that his courage and the resources of his skill were equal to it; no matter how free from danger the operation, you never failed to recognize in touch and manner that sacred sympathy with suffering, the absence of which may degrade the highest skill almost to brutality.

No one ever studied under Dr. Agnew without feeling that in him he had found a true friend. Even the terrors of final examination were dispelled by his kindly reception of the nervous candidate, and by the assurance of his indulgent though just judgment. No graduate ever left the University without carrying with him, graven on the tablets of his memory, the character and conduct of Dr. Agnew, so that his figure should remain high among the heroes of his worship and of his emulation. No estimate can place too high the value and the far-reaching power of such an influence as this. It has helped thousands to become not only good surgeons, but good and honorable men.

Nor have Dr. Agnew's services to medical education and to the University been limited to his personal teaching and personal example. In all the long series of deliberations and practical changes, extending over fifteen years down to this very day, which have resulted in making the University universally recognized as more than ever the leading medical school of the continent, the best exponent of thorough scientific and practical teaching and training, he has been the consistent supporter of reform and progress, and has borne his full share in every measure adopted. It is not strange

then that at this Anniversary time the University should, as has to-day been ordered by the Board of Trustees, confer upon this her honored son, her highest academic title. It is not strange that we—some his pupils, some his colleagues, all his loving friends and brethren—should throng these halls, and lend our voices to the swelling chorus of heartfelt admiration for what he has done, and for what he has been. Gladly would I linger on this theme, but my function here to-night is only to introduce, in few words, one who may fitly speak more fully, since in name and official station, and by his own eminent repute, he truly represents him who in his day was, as is Agnew now, the acknowledged head and leader of the surgical profession in America.

It gives me, then, great pleasure to introduce the orator of the evening, Prof. Samuel W. Gross.